IN THE CLAIMS:

None of the claims are amended herein. However, the claims are reproduced below for the convenience of the Examiner.

1.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A real-time contents editing method for editing a large number of images, including live images or voices which are present in a dispersed fashion on the Internet, and distributing the edited images and/or voices to a plurality of users, the method comprising:

providing a plurality of video cameras each serving as an input device, a plurality of distribution modules each adapted to code an input image taken by a corresponding video camera, by use of a coding standard which enables coding while selecting one of a plurality of coding algorithms and to distribute the coded input image, a plurality of receiving modules each adapted to receive and display the image or voice distributed from the distribution modules, and at least one editing module that requests the distribution modules to distribute the image or voice to the receiving modules;

determining the performance level of a machine to be used through measurement, in the system, of a time required for coding of a video object plane (VOP); and

causing each distribution module to change, in accordance with the performance level, a kind and use frequency of a video object plane (VOP) to be used, to thereby select a coding algorithm which enables highly efficient compression.

2.   (ORIGINAL) A real-time contents editing method according to claim 1, wherein processes for coding the input image are divided into basic processes and auxiliary processes; a coding execution time of each of the basic and auxiliary processes is measured; and the kind and use frequency of a video object plane (VOP) to be used is changed on the basis of results of the measurement.

3.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A real-time contents editing system for editing a large number of images, including live images or voices which are present in a dispersed fashion on the Internet, and distributing the edited images or voices to a plurality of users, the system comprising:

a plurality of video cameras each serving as an input device;

a plurality of distribution modules each adapted to code an input image taken by a

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corresponding video camera, by use of a coding standard which enables coding while selecting one of a plurality of coding algorithms and to distribute the coded input image;

a plurality of receiving modules each adapted to receive and display the image or voice distributed from the distribution modules; and

at least one editing module that requests the distribution modules to distribute the image or voice to the receiving modules,

wherein the performance level of a machine to be used is determined through measurement, in the system, of a time required for coding of a video object plane (VOP), and

wherein each distribution module changes, in accordance with the performance level, a kind and use frequency of a video object plane (VOP) to be used, to thereby select a coding algorithm which enables highly efficient compression.

4-5.   (CANCELLED)

6.   (ORIGINAL) A real-time contents editing system according to claim 3, wherein the coding standard is the MPEG-4 standard.

7.   (ORIGINAL) A real-time contents editing system according to claim 3, wherein the editing module is adapted to request a distribution server to multicast the images and/or voices, and is adapted to generate and multicast a scene description language to be transmitted to a plurality of clients.

8.   (ORIGINAL) A real-time contents editing system according to claim 3, wherein the coding process according to the selected coding algorithm is carried out in a step-by-step manner such that required minimum coding is completed after lapse of a predetermined time, whereupon an auxiliary coding process of enhanced resolution and compression rate is carried out; and if a relevant auxiliary coding process is not completed when a limited period of time has elapsed, the auxiliary coding process is interrupted, and the result of the coding process in an immediately preceding step is distributed.

9.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer-readable medium storing a real-time contents editing program for editing a large number of images, including live images or voices which are present in a dispersed fashion on the Internet, and distributing the edited images or voices to a plurality of users, the program being adapted to a system comprising a plurality of

video cameras each serving as an input device, a plurality of distribution modules each adapted to code an input image taken by a corresponding video camera by use of a coding standard which enables coding while selecting one of a plurality of coding algorithms and to distribute the coded input image, a plurality of receiving modules each adapted to receive and display the image or voice distributed from the distribution modules, and at least one editing module that requests the distribution modules to distribute the image or voice to the receiving modules, the program causing a computer to execute a method comprising:

determining the performance level of a machine to be used through measurement, in the system, of a time required for coding of a video object plane (VOP); and

causing each distribution module to change, in accordance with the performance level, a kind and use frequency of a video object plane (VOP) to be used, to thereby select a coding algorithm which enables highly efficient compression.

10.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) An apparatus, comprising:

a plurality of video units as input devices, the video units collecting data containing at least one of voice or image data;

a plurality of distribution units, each distribution unit being adapted to code input data captured by a respective video unit, the coding units using one of a plurality of coding algorithms to code the data;

a plurality of receiving units, each receiving unit adapted to operably present the coded data received from a respective distribution unit; and

an editing unit that requests the distribution units to distribute coded data to the respective receiving unit, the editing unit determining the performance level of a distribution unit by measuring the time required for coding of a video object plane and, in response thereto, causing the distribution unit to select a coding algorithm in accordance with the performance level, thereby facilitating efficient data compression.